In recent years, Uganda has featured prominently in the news. A little-known country before 1969, its President sought to launch a radical program for socialist construction in that year. On the eve of the inauguration of the “Move to the Left,” a would-be assassin wounded the President. There followed, during the 1969-1971 period, a series of precipitate measures designed to challenge the prerogatives of foreign capital and locally entrenched privilege. Subsequently, in the coup which generated the most controversy throughout Africa since the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah, the army ousted Uganda’s Head of State.

The unorthodox departures from the traditional practices of statecraft by the new military leader, his disregard for the niceties of diplomacy, and the convulsions within Uganda became topical issues splashed in the international press and increasingly in scholarly journals. Many specialists on African affairs received a spate of telephone calls and letters of inquiry asking what to read on Uganda. A frequent response consisted of a sheepish “not much.”

The purpose of this essay is to provide a guide to a body of literature which is in need of systematization. I am prompted to write this bibliographic note because scholars, my own students, and other concerned individuals have no convenient, up-to-date source of information. Uganda is an under-written country. There is a gross lack of data on the political system. Few volumes deal, in their entirety, with Ugandan politics. Much of what is available appears in “obscure” journals with which the general reader may be unfamiliar.

Scholarly work on African politics in general is of uneven quality. There is more literature on Angophone areas than on Francophone. Among the English-speaking countries, more has been written on West Africa than on East Africa. Nevertheless, in many respects, as assessment of the literature on Ugandan politics enables one to make some general statements about the
overall nature of scholarly work on African politics, its capabilities and shortcomings. Although this essay deals with the literature on one country, the purpose is to point out some of the recurring patterns regarding the state of research on African politics.

As in any bibliographical endeavor, the author must establish certain boundaries. This essay concentrates on the post-independence period—1962 to the present, i.e. those works published and available at North American libraries as of early 1973. It will review that literature with a primary focus on politics in Uganda. The literature compiled in related disciplines and journalistic work, though pertinent, will not be considered. Otherwise, the scope does not include every volume and article on Ugandan politics, but only those deemed of central importance. It does not cover unpublished material. Theses and dissertations are omitted. On some of the literature, we will comment at length; in other cases, references are merely cited or only a few remarks are provided.

The discussion which follows is divided into three sections. The first part covers the literature which offers an overview of Ugandan politics. The second is concerned with the analytical literature on specific themes. Part III attempts to draw some general conclusions about the extent of coverage, areas of focus, and deficiencies in the literature. The conclusions seek to raise some central questions concerning these trends.

1. General Treatment

Perhaps the most well-known book on Ugandan politics concerns the pre-independence period and focuses especially on Buganda, the central region. David E. Apter's *The Political Kingdom in Uganda: A Study in Bureaucratic Nationalism* (Princeton University Press, 1961) is the seminal study of the Baganda—Uganda's largest, best educated, and wealthiest ethnic group. Apter terms the Ganda polity a "modernizing autocracy," a system which is remarkable for its capacity to absorb change. Writing on traditional patterns of legitimacy, Apter argues that the modernizing autocracy is able to adopt modern instrumental values up to the point where the basis of the traditional system of authority itself is threatened.

With the rise of nationalism in Uganda, the transformation from one system of authority to another produced an inevitable source of instability in

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1 Delineating the "strictly political works deemed of central importance" necessarily entails a subjective judgment. Due to limitations on space, the author must restrict the scope. While research in related fields contains valuable material on politics in Uganda, the lion's share has been contributed within the field of political science. For a further listing of sources, the reader is advised to consult the Area Handbook for Uganda (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969).